

Intro ([00:00:03](#)):

Women have been a part of carrying the gospel where it's not for generations. And part of the legacy they've left can be found in the courage their stories inspire in an entirely new generation of women who would go. But that legacy can only be realized if their stories are told. Welcome to the Velvet Ashes Legacy Podcast.

Denise ([00:00:46](#)):

Hey all. Welcome back to your Velvet Ashes Legacy podcast. I'm Denise Beck, and I am joined again with Sarah Hilkemann and Laura Chavalier Beer for this month's legacy story. Hey, ladies, how are you today?

Sarah ([00:00:57](#)):

Doing well.

Laura ([00:00:58](#)):

Doing well as well.

Sarah ([00:01:00](#)):

Although I don't know, Denise, you, you might not have the same answer.

Denise ([00:01:03](#)):

I don't have the same answer, actually. So last month I was laughing, thinking about this. I joined you guys from Tuscany, the scene out my window was very different. Today I am looking out at a rainy Tokyo skyline, and I am not feeling very well. I've got a little bit of a cold or something, so sorry for the froggy sounding voice. But yeah, that's, that's where I'm at today. But I'm really excited to sit here and, and do this, actually. It's been fun. I've been visiting some Velvet Ashes women in the community thinking, seeing some of their amazing work they're doing and thinking someday maybe we'll be sitting here telling their stories, ladies, it'd be fun. But yeah. Laura, you are in the midst of a move.

Laura ([00:01:45](#)):

Yeah, we're purchasing a house for the first time and packing up all our belongings. And I used to be the type that was, you know, pride myself on being able to move everything in my car. And now we have a whole household of things. So it's very different than previous moves I've done.

Denise ([00:02:04](#)):

Yes. You don't realize how many things you accumulate. My husband always says, you don't realize how many trips you walk in carrying stuff into your house mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, and then all of a sudden you have to carry it out. But, yeah. Well, I'm really excited to, to be able to tell the story today. I think we say that every month, why would we tell a story we're not excited about? But today we get to tell the story of Amanda Berry Smith, and she was an amazing woman. One of the things I found amazing about her as we studied and read, was that she was nearly six feet tall and beautiful black woman, six feet tall, statuesque, intimidating, just in her stature. But man, she accomplished so much. And I'm, I'm excited to share with you her story today. But we do wanna acknowledge you know, as we have in the past when we are telling stories of black women, that we are not one, and we will never do justice to all of the struggle that they have gone through and all of the things they endured and the complicating factors we will never understand that they also had to face.

Denise ([00:03:13](#)):

And yet we find that she is here in this space that we occupy the women who have made a difference in sharing the gospel in the world. And so we wanna tell her story well. So Laura, thanks for taking that challenge of doing the research in this space to be able to tell Amanda's story well.

Laura ([00:03:33](#)):

Yeah, I'm really excited to be able to bring her story to the Velvet Ashes community today, because she is just an incredible woman. And when you hear about where she came from, she's just probably one of the most unlikely people to become a missionary. Throughout her life, she received multiple calls to venture further out from her home in service to the Lord. But she was born a slave in the United States, and God first led her to give up stable employment when she was freed and become an itinerant evangelist in the United States. And then she eventually went to the UK in India and West Africa. Each time that she stepped out further, she would question and disbelieve the call that God would entrust someone like her to, to do the work that he was calling her to do. But she would move out in obedience and trust in the Lord. And she just had a remarkable life of ministry especially for someone who came from such humble beginnings. And the crazy thing in her story is that she would regularly brush shoulders with well-known Christian leaders of the time. And she became one of those people that people across the world knew about. And maybe you haven't heard of her, but during her time she was quite a famous lady. So really excited to share her story more in depth with you today.

Sarah ([00:04:51](#)):

Well, and Laura, I, one of the things that I just sort of grabbed onto as you were introducing us a little bit to Amanda is it, it can be so helpful for us to hear in her story that it wasn't just like a once and done call that she had to work cross-culturally, but it sounds like, and I think we'll hear more about that, that, you know, she questioned and she struggled, and she had to choose that obedience to the Lord with each new season and each new thing. And so it's not always, or maybe it's not often just one calling that we say yes to for the rest of our lives. And I just love that that hint that we got in that intro to her.

Laura ([00:05:34](#)):

Yeah, that's a good reminder, I think for, for everyone, wherever you are in the world or in your life, that God's call continues throughout your life, and it might look different in different seasons. So for Amanda she was born in 1837 and died in 1915. So her, her lives spanned some pretty important parts of American history. For one thing she was alive during the Civil War, and she was alive when slavery was abolished. So the Civil War was 1861 to 1865, and by the end of 1865, slavery had been abolished in the United States. And so she, she still had lots of struggles even after it was abolished. But that's the kind of political history that she was growing up in and lived in. Interestingly because in, in the case of many black women that you see in history she was able to write her own autobiography that people bought and read. And so that's pretty unusual. But it's, it's over 500 pages long and it's detailed with every aspect of her life. So if you are interested in finding more about her, it's available online. And we'll post that in the notes for free. So what I'm sharing with you today is much of her own voice and her own shared experience that she shared in that autobiography.

Sarah ([00:06:55](#)):

Laura, can we just, can we just read the title to her autobiography, because it just makes me smile when I see it.

Laura ([00:07:04](#)):

Sure. Yeah. She titled it quite long-winded, which was pretty typical of the time actually. She said, "An autobiography, the story of the Lord's dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the colored evangelist containing an account of her life, work of faith, and her travels in America, England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and Africa as an independent missionary".

Sarah ([00:07:25](#)):

Yeah, we've definitely shortened things up.

Denise ([00:07:28](#)):

Yes, publisher would love to get hold of that title today and do some trim work.

Laura ([00:07:33](#)):

But the thing is, you, you kind of get a little snapshot of her life just in that title. So if you didn't know anything else about her, you knew you knew where she's been and how, how, even something about her faith. So, Amanda was born into slavery in the state of Maryland in 1837, January of 1837. So something to keep in mind in terms of the history was that Maryland was close to the Mason Dixon line. So it was one of those states that straddle the Mason Dixon line in the United States that separated slave states from free states. So it was important where you were in relation to that line. If you were an African American. She was the oldest of 13 children, five of whom were born into slavery. And her life was very tough. Making enough to survive and avoid being targeted by those who supported slavery was just a constant battle for her and her family.

Laura ([00:08:26](#)):

Her parents were Samuel Berry and Miriam Matthews Berry. And I mean, this, this is kind of mind boggling to think about when we live in an era where slavery maybe is not as close to us at least in the United States, but her parents were owned by different men with adjoining farms. So their lives were kind of separated in, in some way. And after his master's death, Samuel was put in charge of the farm by the mistress because she trusted him, and she gave him a chance to buy his freedom, which he did by working extra hard and sleeping very, very little. So he would put in extra hours making brooms and doing other work to, to earn money so that he could buy his freedom. And he succeeded in doing that. And he hoped to be able to buy his wife and the five children who were also enslaved at the time.

Laura ([00:09:16](#)):

Now, Amanda's parents and her grandmother, her mother's mother, were very pious Christians. And so she was raised in a strong Christian home where they believed in Jesus. And they read the Bible and faith was an important aspect of their lives. That's not the case for every person who's born into a kind of Christian home. But it was a devout Christian home. So the conversion of her mother's young mistress. So we had just talked about her father's mistress. Now we're talking about her mother's mistress, was an, a pivotal event in her family. This young mistress was converted at a camp meeting in a very dramatic way, and her dying wish was to set Miriam and the children free. So a camp meeting, these were outdoor evangelical religious services where people would come from miles around, pitch a tent for a week to 10 days in the country, and listened to revivalist preachers and often with dramatic results.

Laura ([00:10:13](#)):

They were very popular among Methodists on the frontier, and they were much more informal than a church service. And, but they were often criticized by Christians who practiced a more dignified approach to faith. So Miriam's mistress was converted during this more undignified kind of way way of hearing the gospel. And she had a very strong reaction and was very emotional about it, and kind of dramatic with her family. But she, she was genuine, and she would seek out Miriam and her family to kind of share and fellowship with them as Christians. But sadly, the young mistress became ill quite, quite quickly after being converted. And her dying wish was that her family would set Miriam and the children free, and they resisted this I mean, it was connected to their livelihood and, you know, being able to work their farm. And so they would resist this.

Laura ([00:11:11](#)):

But Amanda's grandmother, every time she would hear that this had request had been made, she would go on her knees and pray, and finally the family relented. And after the mistress had died, they kept their word. And in her autobiography, Amanda credits her grandmother's prayers. So yes, she believes the mistress was kind, but she, she really thinks it was her grandmother's faith in prayers that brought this about. So that was, those were some key pivotal moments in her early life that she could look back on and see God's hand working. So then once she and her siblings and mother were freed, the whole family ended up moving to what was called Lowe's farm in southeastern Pennsylvania. So this is just north of the Mason-Dixon line. So they're, they're not moving very far, but it's a dramatic difference for them that happens because in Maryland, there, there were laws that if a free black man left the state for more than 10 days, he lost his residency and could be found and sold into slavery again.

Laura ([00:12:16](#)):

But that was not the case in Pennsylvania. So that was one of the reasons they wanted to move and get out of that kind of space because now they were free and they wanted to be able to live that free life. Now, granted being, being freed during the time of slavery, you, you still had lots to, to be concerned about and be aware of. Their house in southeastern Pennsylvania ended up being one of the main stations on the underground rail road. And there are dramatic stories in her autobiography of her family rescuing runaway slaves, and these people being hunted down by slave traders or people like that was their work was to go find runaway slaves. And, you know, stories of people hiding in mattresses and people coming in to try to look for them. So this is the environment that she grew up in. I mean, it's, it's like, it's the history that you hear about. She was living, living that life.

Denise ([00:13:15](#)):

I was just gonna say, I'm, as I'm listening to this, and I'm hearing about a father who was so dedicated to freedom and love for his family, that he worked tirelessly, and then that then transitioned into, you know, this life of freedom for others and helping and aiding. And it just, you know, as we alluded to in her, the name of her autobiography, all of the different things that she will go and do from here, and I just wonder how much shaping of her dreams and her gumption and her, you know, ability to just make things happen, were shaped by this father who was relentless in his pursuit of freedom, and a grandmother who prayed a lot. You know, you can just see in these formative years, the stories that you're telling are shaping this woman who is going to go on and do things that seem unrealistic for someone in her time to be able to do.

Laura ([00:14:12](#)):

Yeah. And it, and it wasn't just her father and her grandmother, it was also her mother. She tells the story of her mother confronting these men that would chase down the runaway slaves. They would kind of harass the family and watch the house because they, they knew something was up. And one day she just decided she was done with it. And so she stood up in the public square in this place in Pennsylvania where they're not supposed to have slaves. And she, she publicly like called them out on what they were doing. And the whole, the whole town started gathering and calling for shame, for shame, for shame. And after that, they didn't have as much trouble. So yes, I would definitely would say her family and the way that they interacted and just fought for freedom and demonstrated their faith was very formative for her.

Laura (00:15:04):

Even though she says, looking back, she was kind of resistant to God during some of those years, but it still stuck with her. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. So, although she was free, Amanda had to work really hard. She couldn't afford to miss the income by going to school. So she only had three months of formal schooling. And when you read her autobiography, it's kind of incredible. She wrote a 500 plus page book without having any formal schooling practically. She mostly learned to read from her parents. Her father would read the Bible to them every Sunday morning. So her parents, she doesn't know how they learned to read, but it was something that they passed on to her which was so, so valuable, especially during that time as a black woman. So the main way that she survived just to, to make ends meet was that she would live with a family and be a servant.

Laura (00:15:59):

So in many ways, her life wasn't that different from being a slave, but she still had her freedom and was able to leave when when she wanted to or needed to, she still had to argue about payments, and people weren't always fair or treated her well, but because she was in a free state, there were, there were a lot of people who valued her as an individual, as a person, and treated her well too. So she got, you got a mixture. So her, one of the next things that happened to her life that was rather formative was that she got married. So in September, 1854, at the age of 17, she married Calvin Divine. Her parents weren't, or I guess her, her dad at this point, I think her mother had passed away by then. He wasn't particularly happy with the fact that she was getting married so young.

Laura (00:16:53):

But he didn't, he didn't tell her not to, and he was from her own description, sometimes good and sometimes religious, but also from her own description, he, he was clearly an alcoholic. And whenever he drank alcohol, he was not, not a very nice person. Sadly, she did have two children with him. The first died, sadly again. But her second child, Maizy, a daughter lived, and you hear about her throughout the autobiography, and her husband, Calvin Divine, ended up dying in the Civil War. And so then she was a widow with a young child. So, as I said before, she did grow up in a Christian family, but I wanna tell you a little bit more about her faith journey and kind of how she moved forward in life after getting married and kind of taking on more adult responsibilities. So she had various religious experiences, and then in 1855, she had a near-death experience.

Laura (00:17:51):

But she, she would say she always backslid, so it didn't really ever stick. She kind of had these moments where she felt like she wanted to believe and then she wouldn't really follow through. But then on March 17th, 1856, she views that as the day that she finally converted. She just had a moment while she

was working and praying and kind of a conversation with her, with herself, with God, she often refers to the devil talking to her. So she kind of like resists that and identifies like a voice that's not God that is talking to her. And at that moment, in 1856, she kind of reached the end of herself, cried out in desperation to God, and then from that moment on, never questioned her conversion. During this time in her life, she moved around a lot working for different people.

Laura ([00:18:40](#)):

Sometimes people, the, the work would end, or sometimes the station was not the best situation where she wasn't being treated well. And so she moved around quite a lot. She also tells a story during this time of her sister getting sold back into slavery. And so she goes in to debt to get her out of it. And, and then she tells this miraculous story of finding \$300, and then the person who whose money it was, gave her a reward of \$50 so she could then pay off that debt. And so she tells stories like this repeatedly throughout her autobiography as testimony to God's provision in her life. And, and really, honestly, it seems like she had lots of miraculous events like this that would happen.

Denise ([00:19:25](#)):

But even just like the, the character of, I am in debt because I'm rescuing my sister and I found \$300. And she doesn't look at that as God's provision, but yet does the right thing and returns it, and then is rewarded, you know, with enough to pay off. I mean, that, and to be in that type of a situation and to let go of the money that she found to me is pretty, pretty amazing in itself.

Laura ([00:19:50](#)):

Yeah. And she wrestled with it. I mean, she was definitely human. So she's very honest about how she wrestled with that decision, but ultimately she, she felt like she couldn't just take it. Hmm. So later she moved to Philadelphia and, and ended up marrying a man named James Smith. He was an ordained deacon in the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Now, the, the AME church was founded by Black Americans in 1816 because of discrimination they face in the Methodist Episcopal Church. They're similar theologically, similar to the Methodist, but if you've heard of people talk about black church, churches that are, are mainly African-Americans, this is an example of one, and they're open to anyone. But the, the hallmark is that they were started by African Americans particularly at time, a time in history when they were not accepted or treated well in churches that were started and run by white people.

Laura ([00:20:49](#)):

So the interesting thing about her marriage to James Smith is that he kind of represented himself incorrectly to her and, and lied to her. He promised that he was gonna become an itinerant preacher within this church before he married her. And she had wanted to be an evangelist. And so being a pastor's wife seemed very attractive to her. After they were married, it became clear that, that he didn't have any intention to become a preacher, and he asked for her forgiveness, and she, she gave it, but she was very disappointed in his character in the way he lived out faith. And ultimately, in the end, he didn't really turn out to be a very good husband. He didn't really treat her well or really try to provide for her much in any way. And so, and she looks back on, on kind of the decision to marry him and felt like she didn't really follow the Lord in that.

Laura ([00:21:38](#)):

And she felt like she, she wasn't maybe supposed to do that, but she had this idea that she wanted to become someone who is ministering in some way. And so this was kind of the path that she felt like she, she could take. And I think, I think that is maybe a common experience of feeling like you have this call and maybe this desire to do something for the Lord, and you kind of find your own way to do it. And maybe it's, it's not the way that God intended for it to happen, but she makes the best of his marriage. She ends up having quite a few babies with him. Baby Nell baby Thomas and baby Will, and sadly they all died in infancy and from, from various illnesses, and also probably because mom had to be working and couldn't maybe give them the attention that they needed.

Laura ([00:22:30](#)):

And she just didn't have access to the kind of medicine and medical care that would've helped save them. So that was, that was definitely a hard point in her life. And she was scraping together jobs and money to survive, and she was just moving from one to the next frequently. And so that's something that she just definitely looks back, looked back on with a, with a sad heart especially the, the last one baby Will, because she really, after having so many babies die, so this, she had four babies die, her first baby, and then three with her second husband. She looked back and, and with baby Will, she was like, okay, I'm gonna dedicate him to the Lord. I'm gonna really like, make sure this one survives. And then when he didn't, it was just very devastating.

Denise ([00:23:17](#)):

So, you know, I, I actually got to serve with someone who had a loss of a child while they were on the field, someone whose teammate actually hit and killed their only daughter with a car. And to me, her story and her choice to minister out of that has had such an impact, even more so than if nothing like that had ever happened. And you never want tragedy to happen, but sometimes those choices to continue on doing what the Lord asks you to do are so powerful. And ministering out of loss has such a different and deeper impact than, and so, no, not that we would ever choose that, but when the Lord gets ahold of something like that, the ramifications of it can be so far reaching. And I just, I wonder in her life losing so many of these children and, you know, her husbands, and just like all of that loss, like how the Lord took that and how to us we're reading this, but to the people that lived life with her, her choice, choice to continue on in, and were her words so much more powerful because people knew what she had lived through in that loss.

Denise ([00:24:26](#)):

You know, I just, I sit here and think about that when, when you talk about all of the loss that was compounded in her life.

Laura ([00:24:32](#)):

Yeah, that's a good point, Denise. So in September, 1868 she had a very formative experience in her faith journey. She heard a famous gentleman by the name of John Inskip preach. He was a famous Wesleyan Holiness leader, and she received what the holiness movement called the second blessing or sanctification after hearing him. And she described this, the difference between her first conversion as a pardon and this second blessing, as a purity of heart. And it gave her the power to live the converted life. So there's a lot of theological terms in all that description, but really the essence of it is, is that the Holiness movement, people who kind of were in that movement believed that you could have this second experience with, with God that really gave you the power to live the Christian life. And that

might not be kind of the exact experience that you've had, but the, the main thing is that her faith increased and strengthened after this.

Laura ([00:25:31](#)):

She didn't find it difficult to believe in God for anything she needed. And so it was very formative and led her life and kind of shaped their, how she approached life in general and what she spoke about in ministry later. Faith healing was also an important aspect of the Holiness movements. Some people believed you shouldn't take medicine, but just trust God to heal you. And sometimes they blamed people for not having enough faith if they weren't healed. And for a time, Amanda actually felt like God was telling her not to take medicine. But then after just a year and eight months, she felt like it was okay, and God released her to use common sense and still have faith to pray for healing. So where she landed was just a position that kind of both believed in God's healing, but also said, you know, human medicine was put there by God, and so use it when it makes sense to use it.

Laura ([00:26:21](#)):

Now I'm talking about the Holiness movement, and we've, we've touched on it briefly in some of our other podcasts, particularly with Pandita Ramabai. And just as a reminder, the Holiness movement really grew out of Methodism and where Christians were seeking to kind of return to John Wesley's way of, of doing Christianity. And they, they felt like there were a lot of things that were creeping into Christian culture that maybe weren't the best. And, and they felt like society was maybe going in a wrong direction. And so interestingly, some of the things that they latched onto were things like temperance and not drinking alcohol. So you see a lot of the same people that were in the Holies movement being part of the Temperance Movement. And they also, a lot of the Holiness movement leaders were more open to women in ministry.

Laura ([00:27:13](#)):

And so you also see them being involved in women's suffrage movements. And so it's all kind of intertwined. And, and later Amanda was a part of this part of history, and she became friends with some of these very prominent leaders in these movements. The Holiness and Temperance movements. You might be familiar with people like Hannah Woodall Smith and Francis Willard, very well known in in those movements. So reading Amanda's autobiography, her faith comes through very strongly as very living and active. She practiced a moment by moment relationship with Jesus, bringing everything before him, especially after this experience where she felt like she was more empowered to live the Christian life. She often felt the spirit prompting her to speak to someone, give them a tract, go somewhere or not go somewhere. And she really took everything to the Lord in prayer. At the same time, she was very down to earth.

Laura ([00:28:07](#)):

Some some listeners may find these words that I found in her auto autobiography, very encouraging, so I wanted to share it with you. She says, "One day I was busy with my work and thinking and communing with Jesus before I found out that is not necessary to be a nun or be isolated away off in some deep retirement to have communion with Jesus. But though your hands are employed in doing your daily business, it is no bar to the soul's communion with Jesus. Many times over my wash tub and ironing table, and while making my bed and sweeping my house and washing my dishes, I've had some of the richest blessings. Oh, how glad I am to know this, and how many mother's hearts I have cheered when I told 'em that the blessing of sanctification did not mean isolation from all the natural and legitimate

duties of life, as some seem to think, not at all, it means God in you supplying all your needs according to his richest and glory by Christ Jesus".

Sarah ([00:29:00](#)):

I love that quote so much. So much of cross-cultural life, or maybe just life in general is like that, right? Like where we're over our wash tub, which might be, you know, literally if you are washing your clothes by hand whatever that is today. Yeah. Hanging them on, hanging clothes out on the line mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and just communing with Jesus, or as you're going to the market whatever that might be, you know, even taking those opportunities, not just to have that, I love what she said, you know, the soul's communion with Jesus, but then also talking about him and, and just deepening relationships with others. And, you know, she kind of called out encouraging moms with this, but no matter what stage of life or season of life, like we can sort of feel like, oh, maybe what I'm doing is not important, or I'm too busy, or whatever. But, you know, what are those sweet moments like Amanda was talking about, where we can just be intentional and pay attention to what, what God is saying to us and listening to him and just being with him.

Denise ([00:30:12](#)):

I think even visiting with people who are deep in the thick of language learning and language school, and you know, it being 60 hours plus a week that they are giving to this and, and feeling the guilt of, but my relationship with the Lord you know, like, and so this to me resonates with so many women who are in different seasons, whether that is a mother or language learning, or fill in the blank, that you can have a deep personal relationship with the Lord as you go about your day. Love that. Love that.

Laura ([00:30:47](#)):

Yeah. And, and Amanda took that mentality into the rest of her life. And so now we're gonna talk a little bit more about how her ministry really started. So her second husband, James, ended up dying in 1869, and that was kind of a turning point for her because then she, she had more freedom to do, to do other things besides being a wife. So Amanda became a traveling holiness evangelist. She was a popular speaker in churches and at camp meetings, and she also had a very beautiful voice and was often asked to sing. In November, 1869. She felt like God impressed on her to leave New York where she was living at the time and gave her the words, go, and I will go with you. I mean, what a powerful word to have, to just have that assurance that God's going with you and her daughter at that time.

Laura ([00:31:36](#)):

You might be wondering what's happening with Maizie. She was living with a family in Philly, and that was, that was common to not always live with your, with your children, to kind of board them somewhere, maybe for education or for, for work and service. So that was what was happening with her. But Amanda would go out on short trips for a few months at a time, and she mainly spoke to what she called black folk, folks where male preachers would allow, allow it. She kind of was still struggling with, am I really gonna become this true itinerant evangelist? She struggled with the call. She had offers to go into service and be a servant for a particular family, to have a more secure life. But she felt like the Lord didn't want her to confine herself to that kind of life, but to go and work in his vineyard and to kind of be free to go wherever.

Laura ([00:32:24](#)):

And she shared stories of provision of asking God for God's confirmation and of people sharing generously. And she also interacted with plenty of rough and difficult people too. So it wasn't just all rosy. I mean, she ended up going to her first national Holiness camp meeting in July, 1870. And this was a very famous and big camp meeting. And while she was there, she was asked to sing and share her testimony impromptly to a crowd that included white people, and many people were very moved by what she shared and her singing. So finally, in October, 1870, she stepped out in faith and began evangelistic work in, in earnest. She felt like the Lord was leading her to go to Salem, New Jersey. And she found her way to the pastor's house there on a Sunday evening. She was invited to speak, and she felt the Lord gave her a message, and then she was invited to speak again and again, and people were convicted and converted and the altar was filled, revival broke out, and people were coming from 20 miles around, and it went on for two weeks, day and night.

Laura ([00:33:33](#)):

So talk about a dramatic start to your ministry, <laugh>, I think that's not maybe the case for everyone out there.

Denise ([00:33:41](#)):

Begin with revival.

Laura ([00:33:43](#)):

Yeah. But she felt very encouraged. She felt like God had put a seal on the work and helped establish her faith that he had really chosen and ordained her and sent her. And I, I feel like given her background and who she was, she probably needed that extra like confirmation to feel confident to, to do what she was going to do. During that time that she was in Salem, she was invited to more people's homes and more people were converted. She stayed for several more weeks, and then she went onto another town in New Jersey where there were similar results. And during that time, in this another other town, Millville, New Jersey, she states that she visited several white families. So she's starting to cross the, the racial divide here, which is huge at this time. So she traveled around to various camp meetings and churches preaching and singing, and sometimes there were crowds of two or 3000 people. So her ministry is just taking off, and the Lord is blessing it. She has similar results. Blacks and whites are moved, converted, and give testimony that her words were used by God to, to help move them further in their faith journey. And, and many people believed and told her that way, she was sent by God to them.

Denise ([00:34:55](#)):

But isn't it so like God, I mean, think about the people that he chose to spread his gospel, you know, Jesus and the 12, and they were not anywhere from a cast that you would assume they would be from if they were going to change the world, and their skills were not educated and, you know, so the barriers that they had to go through. And I think about that with Amanda, you know, just like she was a slave and she was a woman, and you know, that her voice was being listened to, that was crossing so many barriers. And I'm just like, so like the Lord to choose somebody unlikely to spread his message, and it just makes me smile.

Laura ([00:35:36](#)):

Yeah, that's so true. It kind of follows a historical precedent that you see in scripture and throughout Christian history. Yeah. So in 1879 or 1878, her life took another dramatic turn. She met an English lady, Ms. Price, who asked her to pray about going to England to get some rest, because she was kind of

feeling worn out around that time. She thought it was silly and that someone like her would go to England, but then the lady offered to pay for it. She felt a deep conviction that she should go, but then she backtracked and said, no, she was very, very troubled by this decision. So she told God that she would go if given another chance. Another offer came through a Mrs. Johnson a few weeks later after Ms. Price had already sailed, but she would have to leave in a week, and so she couldn't go again.

Laura ([00:36:30](#)):

But she found her way there and ended up getting \$75 as a gift that she used to pay for passage to England. And so she planned to be gone for about three months, and she ended up being gone for 12 years. <Laugh>. So I, I don't know about anyone listening, but when I was doing cross-cultural training and prefield orientation, they always told you, you don't, don't have like this set time that you think you're gonna go, because God can upend that and talk about a dramatic difference here, <laugh>. Yeah. So while she was on board the ship and by the way, she did end up leaving Maizie behind in school. So she, she stayed behind in the United States. So on the ship, a Quaker gentleman told the captain about Amanda being a preacher woman. And the captain asked her to take the religious services on the ship, and she did.

Laura ([00:37:23](#)):

And the passengers were blessed and had similar experiences to many of the other people she'd spoken through to throughout her life. When she arrived in England, she went directly to a famous location called Keswick. It's where a large holiness gathering was held each summer. And she was very, she was treated very well, and she notes in her autobiography, No one acted as if I was a black woman. And it just really stood out to her that in this particular space, she was just treated as a Christian woman. She had the opportunity to speak to some of the Keswick workers and clergymen, and they warmly received her and appreciated her, what she had to share. So similarly to her work in the United States, she was invited to and spoke at many meetings and services. And there they actually advertised her. And one of the ways that they would describe her was they would say, Amanda Smith, the converted slave girl, will sing and hold gospel meetings.

Laura ([00:38:22](#)):

And so that was used to attract attention and bring people in. And it was quite encouraging to her that during her time in England, various people decided to support her financially. She had asked the Lord on her way to England on the ship that he would quote, "confirm my coming to England by putting it into the hearts of people to give me some money to help me after I get there. I'm a stranger and no one knows me except Mrs. J". And so the fact that people started giving her money again was this answer of prayer confirmation that she was doing what she should be doing at one particular venue. She was met by a swelling crowd from her diary she wrote Today, we had, we have a large field meeting as I call in England, so not a camp meeting, a field meeting, a kind of picnic.

Laura ([00:39:08](#)):

I stood in a car in this great big field in the midst of five or 600 people. And I tried to talk to them and sing. It was a difficult job and all to me, but I did the best I could. So she had quite the time in England, and just again, as an aside, Maizie was in school in the United States and decided to become a teacher while she was in England. Amanda was in England, and then she decided that she's gonna get married. And Amanda is feeling like, Ooh, I kind of did that. I was young and I got married. It wasn't the best decision. So she tries to convince her daughter to come and spend a year or two with her in England. At

first, she agrees, and then her young man convinces her to stay. But another kind of provision from the Lord was that Amanda could say afterwards that her daughter, quote, could not find could not have got a kinder husband or one that did a better part by a better part by her if I had been living right here with her.

Laura ([00:40:03](#)):

It is wonderful how the Lord provided in that. And so that was just a confirmation again, to her mother's heart, that the Lord was looking out for her. After England, she was invited to speak in Scotland. Similar results, many invitations and just continuation of this, speaking and seeing people convicted and converted and coming to the Lord and deepening their faith. Now, while she was in Scotland, she received word that a friend, Ms. Drake, a missionary to India, was in London. So she decided to visit her. And she told Amanda that she had the conviction that Amanda was to go to India. Amanda's immediate reaction was, I have plenty of work to do here. I'm not going there like this doesn't make any sense. So she said she wouldn't go, even though Ms. Drake said she had the funds to pay for her way.

Laura ([00:40:55](#)):

And finally, after much struggle, she was convicted that she should ask the Lord what he <laugh> what his will was. And she felt like he made it plain to her that she should go, but that she should travel over land. Now, Ms. Drake was not sure about that because it was much more expensive to travel over land. So she said she had the funds to go over sea. And so they argued back and forth via mail, but Amanda believed that the Lord would give her the money to go over land. And by the time Amanda arrived in London, all the necessary funds had come in from her friend. So, and this is what she said, kind of about that provision, she said, so the Lord in this verified his promise, all things whatsoever, he ask in prayer, believing you shall receive. I think I can see now that God wanted me in Africa, and he had to send me to India to educate me a little before he could tell me to go to Africa. I'm sure if he had told me in Scotland he wanted me to go to Africa, I should have made a beeline for the United States. But oh how good the Lord is

Sarah ([00:41:53](#)):

First, I just love that they argued by mail <laugh> <laugh>, like it's not yes, it would be a lot different than having a conversation, you know, via text message or email or something.

Laura ([00:42:04](#)):

<Laugh>, yes. A little bit slower process. <Laugh>.

Sarah ([00:42:07](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. But I also, it just made me think of you know, when the Israelites are coming out of Egypt and it says that God had to take them the roundabout way to the Promised land because he knew that if they immediately were faced with a battle, they might change their minds and go back to Egypt. And so, you know, those kind of roundabout ways don't always make sense, but I love that Amanda could confidently say, you know, the Lord knew what he was doing in her life in sort of the steps and the sequence of things and preparing her.

Laura ([00:42:44](#)):

For sure. So her ministry in India was not all that long. It was about 18 months, but she ended up going overland to India, stopped in Paris, Italy, and Egypt on the way, got to see some sites, and then sailed

from the, from Suez and arrived in Bombay, India in 1879, the end of 1879. And again, kind of the same story continues wherever she goes. She spoke in various meetings. There were English people, Indians of various backgrounds on various subjects, including a deeper consecration to Jesus salvation temperance. She ended up visiting some interesting places that you might have heard of in our previous podcast. She visited Nanny Tall India, where the Butlers had been barricaded during an uprising. While she was there, she endured a flood and houses were swept away. So a very dramatic kind of experience with many kind of miraculous people miraculous occurrences of people being saved.

Laura ([00:43:46](#)):

She also visited orphanages while she was there, and travel, traveled to various meetings to sing and talk, and people would come from far near to hear her. Also, while she was India, she went over to Rangoon in Myanmar, and she visited the grave of Ann Judson. So she had some really interesting experiences to kind of revisit mission history while she was there, but then opportunities to continue her work as well. So then after her ministry in India, she returned to England, and while she was there, she again felt a call. And this time it was to Africa. And she refers back in her autobiography that she first thought about ministry in Africa In 1872, she had heard a talk about missionaries to Africa, and had heard a quote by one of them when, his dying words were this quote, though, a thousand fall, let not Africa be given up.

Laura ([00:44:40](#)):

And these words made a very deep impression on her at the time, but she didn't think she was qualified to go to Africa, someone like her, as she kind of said she thought maybe she would educate her daughter and that she could go, but that was not the case. Amanda arrived in Monrovia, Liberia in January 18th, 1882, and she started taking services right away, as was her custom at the invitation of pastors and missionaries. One of the things that she mentions when she first arrived was that she had a heart to help native boys. She wanted to set up a school after the Sabbath school or the Sunday school, she hoped to get money from America to set it up. And she ended up receiving money from a friend in Ireland instead. But sort of the, some of the history of Liberia and also a neighboring country, Sierra Leone, it's important to kind of have the context.

Laura ([00:45:34](#)):

So these are both countries on the west coast of Africa, and Liberia was founded by free people of color from the United States. So people who were kind of being, deciding to, to go back to Africa and kind of set up a new society there. And Sierra Leone had a similar history, but it was more of a British resettlement. They would take African Americans who were black loyalists at the time during the American Revolution and resettle them in Sierra Leone. So both countries had these various kinds of African Americans coming back to them, not to say that they had ever come from those countries, but just coming back to Africa. And then both countries had indigenous peoples in them who had never left. And so there's, there's various cultural and racial and political things that are going on there with this mixture of people. And that's the setting that Amanda ended up in.

Laura ([00:46:32](#)):

So she was in Liberia for a while, then she ended up going to Cape Palmas another, an island off the coast of Africa with a famous Methodist missionary named Bishop William Taylor. So she had to end that work with the native boys, but others kept it up. And she just continued to travel and speak throughout her, her time in, in West Africa. And she saw many conversions and had conversations with

tons of people. She returned to Monrovia, Liberia, ended up going to Sierra Leone, Grand Canary back to Liberia. So she's kind of traveling around West Africa. And she described her impression of the cultures that she saw and, and what life was like as a missionary. And in many ways, it's not very different than what you would read or hear from a white missionary, because for her it was all new and different too.

Laura ([00:47:24](#)):

So one of the things that she says in terms of her impressions of life of a missionary was quote, the Lord was so good that I generally had a little cash by me, but often it was not a question of cash and you couldn't get the things you needed. They were not to be had. But it was wonderful how I learned to manage and get on it is said that necessity is the mother of invention, and Africa is certainly the place where it can be developed <laugh>. And, and that just struck me because I mean, I ended up going to, east Africa as a missionary, many decades later after Amanda. And that I felt like I could relate to that quote. Udespite the fact that so much history and time had passed. She also observed the hard life that many of the women experienced, carrying heavy loads of wood and water while men would walk in front of these girls and women.

Laura ([00:48:13](#)):

And so that was just an impression that she had. And she talks about how, how girls and women had very little choice in husband. And again, these are things that other missionaries would've pointed out as well. During her time in West Africa, she ended up adopting two children. The first was a little girl named Francis. And she took care of her and often would pay for kind of her upkeep wherever she happened to place her. So Francis didn't always travel around with her everywhere, but she, she would look after her and make sure that she was cared for. And then she also adopted a little boy, named a Little Bob. And the interesting thing about him was that he had, he still had parents who were alive and living, but they hounded Amanda and they begged her to adopt him and take him and raise him as her own.

Laura ([00:49:07](#)):

They really wanted him to have the opportunity to be educated. And so they ended up giving up their parental rights, and she finally gave in and adopted him around the age. He was about six years old. So she taught Little Bob to read, brought him back to England and put him in school. And she helped to pray a prayer of conversion with him that was authentic because later she, he would talk about his faith growing in school. She was very fortunate to have friends who paid for his schooling and looked to that as God's provision. So she ended up serving in Africa for about eight years in various ways. And during that time, she also struggled with sickness and suffered from fever many times. So it was, it was also, it was difficult in many ways. But when she left Africa, she went home with letters from people that were glowing with praise.

Laura ([00:50:01](#)):

She had a letter from the former president of Liberia, Church leaders, and those she had worked administered with. If you read her autobiography, the last chapter is full of letters of recommendation and letters to her from figures around the world, as well as her adopted son. You can see other people's words about her, and it confirms what you already have heard from her, her own testimony that she was kind of a, a remarkable woman. And these letters kind of amplify that even more. She left Sierra Leone in November, 1890, and so that was kind of the, the, the end of her time. She had been there for eight years and looking back at her time in Africa, she wrote kind of just right when she had returned

she said, I calmly looked over all my mind and my work in Africa. I felt that while there was so much to be done and I had only done a little yet, that I had God's approval and that I had done all I could. I went to Africa at his bidding and did not leave till I was sure I had hit his sanction.

Denise ([00:50:58](#)):

I feel like there's so much in that section about Africa. I think I hear it because that's where I served Laura, you as well, you know, but so if you think about even Little Bob and the adoption, and I feel like so much has changed in the world of adoption in that country specifically, you know, where there's a lot of work being done to prevent things like that from happening today where if people do have parents, you know they, they want them to be continued to be raised by those parents and equipping those parents to be able to provide for them versus, you know, the outside influence taking, taking them away, you know? So I hear that, and I'm just thinking so much has changed since, since that time for her there. But also Sarah, does it remind you a little bit as she was talking about that reminded me a little bit of Dr. Helen Roseveare and her impact in Africa and all of the recommendations and what people would say about her afterwards and, you know, just the impact that she had. And I, as you were saying that I just, I, I kind of got that, that vibe of, you know, wow, what, what a great work that had ripples that were far outlasting her time and service there.

Sarah ([00:52:10](#)):

Yeah. Well, and knowing and having peace with when it's time to leave, you know that it might feel like, well, what did, what was I able to accomplish? And yet, like just trusting the Lord that he will continue the work that he, he's the one that is doing the work. And so, you know, we can just trust him for, for when we go and when we leave, and that he holds it all.

Denise ([00:52:36](#)):

That's so true. Because how many of us wrestle with that? I, I'm leaving sooner than I had hoped. You know, Laura, you mentioned earlier, right? Hold the time loosely. Don't put a time on it because it's the Lord's to, you know, and how many of us wrestle with when? And I love that at the end she was able to say I was doing what he asked, and when he was ready for me to leave, you know, I can leave knowing I did everything he asked me to do. So, yeah.

Laura ([00:53:03](#)):

Yeah. So for Amanda, when she left Africa, she returned to work in England, Scotland, and Ireland. And it was very similar to what she had been doing before traveling around speaking, but she still struggled with sickness. And eventually she returned to the United States. And in her later years she spent the time setting up an orphanage or children's home in Harvey, Illinois. It was called after her, the Amanda Smith children's Home. And it opened in 1899, and it was, it was meant for to help needy African American children. And one thing you, you might know if you read about this later part of her life, she was probably a better evangelist than she was administrator. She faced a lot of difficulties with that endeavor. And it ended up closing two years after her death in 1915. But that is a part of, of her legacy still.

Laura ([00:53:59](#)):

And just in summary to, to review kind of her life, she ended up raising and supporting three children who, who lived to adulthood and they became believers. So her own, her biological daughter, Maizie, and then Francis and Little Bob and Francis ended up staying in West Africa for health reasons, but she

was still part of Amanda's life. Amanda also worked across racial divides. She was honored and respected by people of various racial backgrounds. And for that, she also suffered, she was criticized by people on in both camps and for different reasons, her teachings influenced thousands of people across the globe with her simple messages of salvation through Jesus, deeper consecration to Jesus, trust in his provision, temperance and holiness. And then her autobiography that she wrote was also widely circulated. Interestingly, she was also connected to the founding of the NAACP. And then finally, according to mission historian Gary McGee, her spiritual, spiritual fervor and calls for justice in society. And her work in missions inspired an expanded role for women in ministry, particularly within, within the AME and Methodist churches. So she, she was a very influential woman and did many things to promote the cause of Christ and to draw people in closer relationship to him in including other things that were related to just society being a better place for people to live and work.

Denise ([00:55:26](#)):

I think as you do that summary, Laura, I'm just taken back to the fact that it was so unlikely that she could have had this impact. And going back to just, you know, that the Lord obviously had his hand on her and that she was shaped by so many people. And, and even, you know, as you talk about the end of her, her life, you know, in her maybe lack of administrative skills, what a great reminder that we need other people, you know? And it's not a failure on our part to recognize a weakness that God might choose to meet through somebody else that he partners us with. And to, to ask for those places where we lack for the Lord to bring other people that are gifted in that way. And, and I don't know, you know, what our listeners are hearing or experiencing today, but that a, a weakness or a lack that you have may be God's opportunity to connect you with other workers and partner and shore up and strengthen you to do what you do well. And you know, just what encouragement do you need to hear from that today that, that your weakness may be an opportunity in that as well. So I would just you know, the, your recap just inspires me of what we can learn from her and what the Lord might be using in her story to inspire us to, to, to his work that he's called us to do. Mm-Hmm.

Laura ([00:56:46](#)):

Mm-Hmm.

Sarah ([00:56:46](#)):

<Affirmative>. Yeah. I think one of the things that really stuck out to me was her perseverance, you know just goodness, all of the suffering that she experienced in her early life. But it, it made me think of the verse in Romans 5 where it talks about, you know, suffering produces endurance, and Amanda had her fair share of that. But then the fruit of that was this endurance and this perseverance through all of these different experiences that she had and that endurance produced character which produced hope that kept her going through all of the ups and downs and, you know, adapting to all of these different cultures and all of these different people that she was working with. And the, I don't know, I would need a lot of hope to just keep preaching and, you know, singing in front of big groups of people and all of that. So yeah, just how, like you said earlier, Denise, like, we would not wish suffering on anyone. And you know, I wish that Amanda had not lost all of those babies and had to lose two husbands and all of this. And yet we see how that really did produce hope in her life, and it had such an impact for the gospel.

Denise ([00:58:04](#)):

And Laura, you were somewhat familiar with her, you know, before this research. What, what stood out to you? What has been inspiring to you about her life?

Laura ([00:58:12](#)):

I mean, it's, I keep going back to the fact that it was so unlikely, like mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, and it, and it points to the fact that it was God involved in her life. Yeah. Like, she didn't, she didn't want this from an early age. She, she was not someone that people would've expected this from. And she is the first to point out that God was the one who did it. And when you read her story, you're like, it, it couldn't have been anything else. She had everything stacked against her.

Sarah ([00:58:43](#)):

One thing too that I think is so good is that at least in the US, at least for me, maybe, I think when we think about black historical figures we think of people who were involved in justice and anti-slavery and anti-racial issues, and, you know, that's super important. Rightly so, we should focus on those things. But I don't know that we focus so much on the black men and women who have had an impact spiritually. Especially women. Like we've talked about how unlikely Amanda Berry Smith's life was, and her impact was. So yeah, that just makes me all the more grateful for her, her humble obedience and just being able to learn more from her story.

Denise ([00:59:31](#)):

And Sarah, I would just say that even on top of that, you know, we don't know the ripples that she had. We know these people that Laura has pointed out that, you know, whose lives were changed because of her obedience. But the ripples in on so many continents of her ability to stand up and cross some of those boundaries and barriers and still do what God asked them to do, who quietly was inspired by that, who went on to change the world or change their world or their community. And, and I just, I love that we get a glimpse of that. And I, I would just say to those women out in our community who are listening, who feel like they maybe aren't equipped to do what they feel God is asking them to do, or there's things in them, there's weakness in them, and, and they don't know how they can possibly make a difference in the world, be inspired by this story of this unlikely character who rose to meet a call that was above and beyond anything she could have asked or imagined.

Denise ([01:00:30](#)):

And, and we just hope, that's the reason we tell these stories, is that you can be inspired and challenged to have courage for your unlikely place that the Lord has you in, whether that's a physical location or whether there are those barriers because of your position in the society that you are in, that you know that you can make a difference if it's something that the Lord is asking you to do. So we're gonna keep telling these stories, and so we hope that you join us here next month as we bring you another story that we hope will inspire you for courage, for your story that might give courage to someone else's legacy. So thanks for joining us ladies. Sarah, Laura, thank you so much for this conversation. And we'll be here next month with another Velvet Ashes legacy story.